

Washington State Farm to School Network Oct. 23 Well-Check & Action Planning Retreat Outcomes, Next Steps, and Notes

On October 23, 2019, over thirty Washington State Farm to School Network leads, members, and other stakeholders gathered to guide the next phase of the network initiative to grow farm to school statewide. Attendees reflected on the Network's accomplishments and impacts since its launch in May 2018, made some adjustments to the network structure and functions, worked on the Network's racial and social equity strategy, and identified some key next steps for the Network and individual members to take.

The retreat objectives included:

- ✓ Share progress made since the Network's 2018 launch
- ✓ Identify & prioritize next steps to advance the network's Goals and Strategic Priorities
- ✓ Develop a mini "Action Plan" for the prioritized next steps



Highlights of Network Impacts & Successes 2018-2019

- At least 50 members and farm to school practitioners statewide have participated in peer-to-peer learning and networking calls between Aug. 2018-Oct. 2019 in four topical Communities of Practice
- Updated the OSPI School Garden Map, now counting 304 school gardens statewide
- Developed baselines for statewide farm to school metrics
- Collected six farm to school success stories from local members
- 212 members and local farm to school practitioners attended six Regional Gatherings in spring 2019

Next Steps & Action Plan

- 1. Mobilize the Network to educate superintendents; school district administrators; school board members; county, regional, and state leaders about the benefits of farm to school programs** in order to create buy-in and support for farm to school locally, including school food, nutrition education, school gardens and outdoor learning

Action Plan

- **Advocacy & Outreach Team** will develop a strategy, messaging, (such as ESSA plan impacts) and "asks" for target audiences. Mobilize Network members to reach out to target audiences. Coordinate opportunities for Network members to participate in education and outreach with school districts, local and state leaders.

Convener: Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition

Initial team members: Bellingham Public Schools, Common Threads, Creative Culinary Solutions, EcoTrust, OSPI Child Nutrition, WSDA Farm to School WSU Food Systems Team

- 2. Identify new ways to share stories of farm to school successes** outside of the network (such as social media)

Action Plan:

- Merge the Metrics & Evaluation and Storytelling & Communications Network Action Teams. The **Metrics & Storytelling Team** combine quantitative and qualitative communication about farm to school impacts
- The new **Metrics & Story-telling Team** will develop a plan and tools for all Network members to use in their own communities or through the Network. Plan will:
 - Identify priority target audiences (e.g. funders, parents, allies, school & community leaders, or elected officials)
 - Engage all parts and members of the Network to capture stories to highlight
 - Provide better tools to help members identify and tell their stories, especially in ways that are useful to peers and help replicate successes

This meeting was supported by the WSU Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources (CSANR) and the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (SARE).

Convener: WSDA Farm to School

Initial team members: Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition, OSPI Child Nutrition, United General Health District, Whatcom Farm to School

Updates to Network Structure & Functions

1. Created the Network Coordination Team (NCT) Core Member role to formalize Network Coordination team membership, required meeting attendees, and duties.

- NCT Core Members will volunteer to serve for two-year terms.
- Watch for an open call for NCT Core Members this fall, to start in January 2020!

2. Planned next steps to grow opportunities for peer-to-peer influence and sharing of best practices, successes, and “how farm to school works” within current functions, especially the four Network Communities of Practice (CoP).

Overall, themes emerged across multiple CoPs including:

- Just continue building the community – things are working!
- More participation and inclusion in current network activities
- More dynamic networking calls, find more ways to communicate and share ideas, challenges, solutions
- Do more intentional engagement and recruitment of members and leads

Priorities for the year ahead identified within each CoP topic that Lead organizations will support are:

School Gardens & Farm-based Education

- **Integrate and share professional development opportunities** through in-person/online/calls, experiences and events

Local Food Sourcing for School Meals

- **Continue/more CoP calls.** Recruit speakers, organize around a theme or topic.
- **Fair prices for farms and more funding for food costs**
- **Regional farmer-School Food Service Director meetings to build relationships**, communication and make better use of current funds
- *Tabled for future consideration:* infrastructure & equipment for scratch cooking, culinary & scratch cooking skills for food service staff

Farm to ECE

- **Make the Network’s website a hub for ECE professionals** by updating resources, adding success stories, and other tools; increase number of programs linking to resources
- **Increase membership & participation**

Food & Agriculture Education

- **Recruitment to bring more energy and ideas** – be more inclusive and create more space at the table. Be intentional about recruitment.
- **Create more dynamic ways to communicate**, share ideas, challenges, solutions

Strategy for Advancing Racial & Social Equity

The Network Coordination Team will continue to develop and implement a strategy to advance racial & social equity within the Network’s Communities of Practice, website resources, and through Network communications; and support equity within the work of member organizations. The Network Coordination Team will prioritize:

- Finding ways to **offer more trainings for Network members** to keep learning, developing analysis within CoP topics
- Ensuring that Network gatherings and other **farm to school education and outreach opportunities are accessible** for all who want to participate
- **Mobilizing and sharing assets**, particularly to communities of color working on farm to school issues
- **Mapping assets:** What do we have? What do we need?
- **Engaging farm to school organizations** that work to advance racial and social equity in the Network

This meeting was supported by the WSU Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources (CSANR) and the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (SARE).

Meeting Attendees

Attendees included Network Coordination Team members, [Community of Practice](#) leads, and some key farm to school and ECE stakeholders.

Facilitators:

- Ellen Gray, former Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network Director
- Nyema Clark, Nurturing Roots Farm

Attending organizations:

- Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition
- Bellingham Public Schools
- Creative Culinary Solutions
- Cloud Mountain Farm Center
- Cloudview Farm
- Ecotrust
- GRuB
- Living Well Kent
- Nurturing Roots
- OSPI Child Nutrition
- OSPI Learning & Teaching
- Thurston Conservation District
- Thurston County Food Bank
- Tilth Alliance
- United General District 304
- Viva Farms
- Washington Green Schools
- Washington State Dairy Council
- Washington State Department of Health
- Whatcom Farm to School Support Team
- WSDA Regional Markets Program
- WSU Extension Clark County
- WSU Extension Snohomish County
- WSU Food Systems Team